

A
SERMON,

Preached before the

SYNOD

Of Lothian and Tweeddale.

At Edinburgh the 5th Day of May 1702.

Published at the Desire of several Reverend Bretheren of the said Synod,

By Mr. William Wisbart Minister of the Gospel at Leith.



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SEYMOUR

Preached before the

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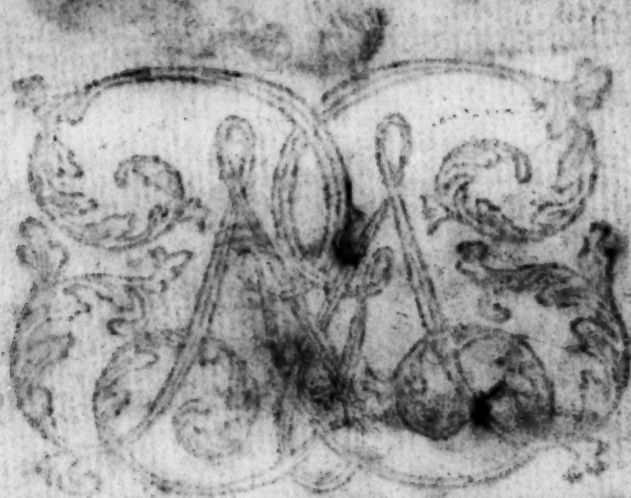
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at Edinburgh the 25th Day of May 1700.

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By Mr. William W. of the Gospel at Lamb.



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SERMON

On 1st. Tim. 6. 20.

O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy Trust.

TIMOTHY, To whom this Epistle is directed by the Apostle Paul, was Piously Educated from a Child, *1 Tim. 1. 5. & 3. 15.* And being well reported of to the Apostle, by the Bretheren that were at *Lystra* and *Iconium*, he thereupon made him his Companion in his Travels, *Acts, 16. 2, 3, 4.* and having given great proof of his Piety, Faithfulness, and other Qualifications, he was ordained a Minister by Paul, and the Presbytery, *1 Tim. 4. 14. 2 Tim. 1. 6.* After which the Apostle employed him as his Fellow-Labourer in the Work of the Gospel, and in Messages to several Churches. *Rom. 16. 21. 1 Thess. 3. 2. Act. 19. 22.* And having accompanied the Apostle Paul into *Asia*, (*Acts 20. 4.*) he did upon the Apostle's Intreaty abide still at *Ephesus*, and had the care of that Church committed to him as an Evangelist. *1 Tim. 1. 3, 4. 2 Tim. 4. 5.* During his abode there, the Apostle Writes this Epistle to him, to encourage and direct him in the Management of that great Trust. *1 Tim. 3. 15.* The Scope, then, of this Epistle, is to direct Timothy, and in him all the Ministers of the Gospel, how to behave themselves in the whole of their Ministerial Work: So that this Epistle is a most excellent Directory to all Gospel Ministers; and it is concluded with this final and weighty Exhortation, *O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy Trust.*

We may notice these Three Things in the Words.

1. The Person to whom this Exhortation is directed.
2. The manner of preposseing it.
3. The Duty enjoined.

First, We have here the Person to whom this Exhortation is directed, described by his Name, Timothy. It may be worth our while,

to consider who and what he was. He was a *Young Faithful Minister of Jesus Christ*.

1. He was a *Minister of Christ*. He was one of the Extraordinary Ministers of the New Testament, to wit, an *Evangelist*, according to the Scripture Notion of that Word. *2 Tim. 4. 5*. The proper Work of *Evangelists* was, to Travel as Messengers between one Church and another, at the direction of the *Apostles*, for watering the Churches, and setting in order the things that were wanting. *Tit. 1. 5*. Their office was comprehensive of the office of *Pastors* and *Teachers*; So that beside what was proper to them, the whole Work of *Pastors* and *Teachers* did belong to them by vertue of their Office; And this Duty to which the *Apostle* here Exhorts *Timothy*, was common to him with the Ordinary Ministers of the Gospel. So that, even Ministers have need not only to be put in remembrance of their Duty, but also to be excited and stirred up to it. There are Temptations, Dangers, Difficulties and Discouragements, that are special to them; So that they need Warnings, Exhortations and Encouragements, as much, yea more then other Men.

2. *Timothy* was a *Godly and Faithful Minister*. His Name *Timothy* signifies, an *Honourer of God*. It seemeth that his Parents devoted him to *GOD* from the Womb, and earnestly desired that he might be a Fearer and Honourer of *GOD*, and therefore would put him in mind of his Duty by this name: And indeed he was not unmindful of it, but through Grace, was Answerable to the name which they gave him. He had been acquainted with the Scriptures from his Childhood. *2 Tim. 3. 15*. And though he was a Sickly Man, and had frequent Bodily Infirmities; (*1 Tim. 5. 23*.) yet he was Eminent in Gifts and Graces, such as Knowledge. *2 Tim. 3. 15*. Faith. *2 Tim. 1. 5*. Great Affection to and care of the Souls of People. *Phil. 2. 20*. Zeal for the Interests of *Christ*, *Phil. 2. 21*. and Faithfulness in the Work of the *LORD*. *1 Cor. 4. 17*. Upon the accompt of all which, he became very dear to the *Apostle Paul*, so that he maketh honourable mention of him in severals of his Epistles. *1 Cor. 4. 17*. *Philip. 2. 1, 20, 21*. *1 Thess. 3. 2*,

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Yet the Apostle found it needful to Exhort *even Him* to diligence and Faithfulness in the Work of the *LORD*. So that even the best of Ministers need to be seriously Exhorted, excited and stirred up to Faithfulness in the Duties of their Office. The most zealous and Faithful Ministers, are but Frail Weak men, and have much strong Corruption in them. Grace even in them is but weak, and they are not set beyond the reach of Temptations more than other men; And they have so much to do, and for the most part see so small Fruit of what they do, that they are apt to fall slack, and remiss in their Duty: And upon all these Accompts, they have great need of upstirring.

3. Though *Timothy* was a Faithful Minister, yet he was but a Young Minister. Flee also Youthful Lusts, saith the Apostle to him. 2 Tim. 2. 22. And let no Man despise thy Youth. 1 Tim. 4. 12. And the Apostle considering his Youth, is the more Earnest with him. O *Timothy*, keep that, &c. Young Ministers above all others had need to look well to themselves in the matters of *GOD*, that they be faithful and diligent. They need special Warnings and Excitations. Their Danger is greater: For, Pride and Ambition, Vain-glory and Ostentation, Self-seeking, Self-conceit, and Self-confidence, Wrathful Affections and other Lusts, are more incident to them. Against all which the Apostle warns this Young Minister, in that place cited. 2 Tim. 2. 22. Again *Satan* is most busie with Young Ministers. They are of Warm Affections, and full of Action, and their Spirits are quick and lively; Therefore *Satan* loves to have them, because in these Respects they are in more Capacity to do him service, if once he can tempt them to Unfaithfulness. Next again, *Satan* thinks to prevail the more easily with Young Ministers, because they have but small Experience: And he would gladly nip them in the very Bud, to render them for ever useless in the Work of the Ministry. And lastly, He hath most Hope of Young Ministers. As for Old Godly Ministers, who have given many Proofs of their Zeal and Faithfulness to *GOD* under various Tryals and Temptations, *Satan* hath almost lost all Hope of them. He hath most Hope of them that are Young. Oh then! Let us who are Young Ministers take Warning, and keep a strict Watch over our selves. Great need have we to take heed to our selves

selves, and to the Ministry that we have received of the LORD JESUS.

Second: We have here *the manner of proposing this Exhortation.* (O) Timothy, keep &c. (O) keep it. This Particle (O) is expressive of the Apostles great Earnestness. It is an Exclamation that gives vent to earnest and vehement Desire. The Apostles Heart was much set on this, to have Timothy Faithful to his Trust: He vehemently desired it: Therefore he Exhorts him with great Earnestness. I might shew you, how this manner of Expression Imports. 1. *The great weight and importance of the Duty here enjoined.* 2. *The great hazard there is of coming short of our Duty in this matter.* 3. *The dangerous consequence of a Ministers Unfaithfulness.* And 4. *The great Care, Diligence and Application that is, upon all these accompts, necessary to the right management of the weighty Trust that is committed to them.* And I may add 5. *The great seriousness and earnestness to be used by Ministers, in exciting one another to Diligence and Faithfulness in their Ministerial Work.* But I pass these.

Third: We have here, *The Duty enjoined, keep that which is committed to thy Trust.* Where we have something implied, and something expressed.

1. That which is here Implied is, That *something, or somethings* were committed to Timothy's Trust. The manner of Expression is *Metaphorical*, borrowed from Servants, who have somethings Entrusted to them, or Deposited in their Hands, for which they are accountable to their Master. By that which was committed to Timothy's Trust, some understand these Gifts and Graces, whereby God had fitted and qualified him for the Duties of his Office, and which were Talents committed to his Trust. Others understand the Doctrine of the Gospel, the Dispensation whereof was committed to him. But there is no necessity obliging us to restrict the Words to any of these: Wherefore I understand the Words more Generally, of all things that were Entrusted to him by the Lord Jesus, and especially of the Objects about which his Gifts and Graces were to be Exercised; for Gifts and Graces are given to Ministers, to fit and qualify them for the right Management of their great Trust. And I think it is well observed by some, that the Words of my Text are an *Epilogue* or Conclusion, wherein all the Directions and Exhorta-

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hortations the Apostle had given in this *Epistle*, are gathered together into one Summ.

Now, the Things committed to *Timothy's* Trust were of two sorts. 1. Somethings were proper to him as an *Evangelist*, at which I hinted already. 2. Somethings were common to him with *Pastors* and *Teachers*, the ordinary Ministers of the New Testament; As, the Glorious Gospel, all the Affairs and Concerns of the House of God, the Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government thereof, and the Precious Souls of People. These were the Things committed to his Trust, and that are committed to the Trust of all Gospel Ministers, as we shall see afterward.

They were committed to him by the *Lord Jesus Christ*: Yet not immediatly, but by the Intervention of Men having Authority from the *Lord Jesus* for that Effect; For he was ordained by the laying on of *Paul's* Hands, and of the Hands of the Presbytery. 1. *Tim.* 4, 14. and 2, *Tim.* 1, 6.

2. That which is expressed in the Words, is, That he should keep that which was committed to him. The word in the Original, here rendered *keep*, is very Emphatick. It is sometimes used of Shepherds keeping watch over their Flocks by Night, in which there is usually most Danger. *Luk.* 2, 8. It is sometimes rendered, *beware*, 2, *Pet.* 3, 17. And so it implyeth Caution and Circumspection. It signifyeth *to keep as a Prison is kept*, which is done usually with much Care, Strictnes, and Diligence. It is used also of God's keeping his People. *Joh.* 17, 12. 2, *Thess.* 3, 3. which he doth with much Tendernes and watchful Care, because of the manifold Dangers to which they are exposed,

Well then, the Apostle doth here plainly enough insinuate, that the Souls of People, the Truths of the Gospel, and all the Precious Interests and Concerns of the House of God, were in great Danger from Satan and his Instruments; And therefore he exhorts *Timothy*, to keep these Precious Things, with much Holy Watchfulness and Diligence, Care and Tendernes. He doth likeways insinuate, that *Timothy* and other Gospel Ministers, were lyable to many Temptations to Carelesnes, Negligence, and Unfaithfulness, in the Duties of their Function; And that there was great Danger of Compliance with them, considering the Remainder of Corruption

tion in them, and the weakness of Grace even in the Best: And therefore exhorts him, and all Ministers in him, to much Holy Caution and Circumspection, Watchfulness and Diligence, in the Management of the great Trust committed to them.

The Words being thus Explained, I shall speak to these two Doctrines from them.

1. *The Office of the Ministry is an Office of great Trust.*
2. *It is the necessary and indispensable Duty of all Gospel Ministers to keep that which Christ hath committed to their Trust.*

The First Doctrine is, *The Office of the Ministry is an Office of great Trust. Or Ministers of the Gospel are Men of great Trust.*

So much is implied in the Titles that are often given to Ministers in Scriptures. They are called *Shepherds*, to whose Care the Flock of God is committed, *Joh. 21. 16. Acts 20. 28. 1 Pet. 5. 2.* They are called *Christ's Ambassadors*, *2 Cor. 5. 20.* They are entrusted with the Power and Authority of the Lord Jesus, and with Messages and Embassies of the greatest Moment to the Glory of God, and the good of Souls. They are also called *Stewards*, *1 Cor. 4. 1.* They are Entrusted with all the Provision in the House of God, that they may give every one their Portion thereof. Again, They are called *Rulers over the House of GOD*, *Luk. 12. 42.* These Titles Import a great and weighty Trust.

In prosecuting this Doctrine, I shall shew,

1. *What these Things are which are committed to the Trust of Ministers.*
2. *By whom these Things are committed to their Trust.*
3. *How these Things come to be committed by Christ to the Trust of such Men as are now set a part for the Work of the Ministry.*
4. *What the committing of these Things to their Trust doth Imply.*
5. *Why the Lord Jesus hath committed so great a Trust to poor frail Men.*

And then Lastly, I shall make Application of the Doctrin.

First, *What are these Things that are committed to the Trust of Gospel Ministers.*

1. *The glorious Gospel is committed to them, 1 Tim. 1. 11. According to the glorious Gospel, which was committed to my Trust, 1 Tim. 2. 4. ----- we were allowed of God to be put in Trust with the Gospel.*

the precious Truths of God are committed to them; But more especially Gospel Truths, which are wholly supernatural and mysterious. The Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. Hence they are called *Stewards of the Mysteries of GOD*, 1 Cor. 4. 1. Such Mysteries are, the Mystery of the glorious Trinity, the Mystery of Redemption, the Mystery of the Incarnation, Death and Sufferings of the eternal Son of God, &c. Further, all the Prerogatives Royal of the Lord Jesus, as the *sole King and Head of his Church*, That he alone hath Power and Authority to appoint the Government of his House, to Institute his own Officers, and to give Laws to them for the Right Administration of this Government; And that He is the sole Fountain of all Church Power and Authority, that it is Derived from him alone, and that it is specifically and essentially different from the Power of the Civil Magistrat, and Independent thereupon. These are some of the precious Truths committed to the Trust of Ministers.

Particularly, Two Things concerning the Gospel, are committed to them. 1. *The safe Custody and Preservation thereof*, Of which I shall speak afterward. 2. *The publick Dispensation thereof*, 1 Cor. 9. 16, 17. ----- *Wo is unto me if I Preach not the Gospel* ----- *A Dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto me*. Ministers are entrusted with the Dispensation of the Word and Sacraments, which contain the great Mysteries of the Kingdom of GOD. They are GOD'S *Stewards*, to dispense His Blessings, 1 Cor. 4. 1. *Clouds*, to distill down Showers of Plenty on GOD'S weary Heritage. *Isa.* 5. 7. *Deut.* 32. 2. *Vessels*, not to contain only, but to carry the Pearle and Treasure of the Kingdom, 2 Cor. 4. 7. The Gospel is a *Treasure*, not for Ministers to keep to themselves, but to Impart to others. They are to *make known the Mystery of the Gospel*, *Ephes.* 6. 19.

2. Ministers are Entrusted with the *Care and Oversight of the House of GOD*, and all the Affairs thereof. Hence they are called *Overseers or Bishops*, *Acts* 20. 28. 1 Tim. 3. 1. The Word in the Original, rendred in the one place *Overseer*, and in the other place *Bishop*, is one and the same. Now, they are *Overseers*, not only of the Flock, but of all the Matters of the House of GOD. It's true, the *Supreme Oversight* of the House of GOD belongs to Jesus Christ, as the only LORD and Master of the House, and *Head over all Things*

to the Church, Ephes. 1. 22. Yet Ministers have a Ministerial Oversight derived from Him; Hence they are called Rulers over GOD'S House, Luk. 12. 42.

Particularly, Ministers are Entrusted. 1. *With the Worship of GOD.* Therefore the Apostle in the 2d Chapter of this Epistle, giveth Directions concerning it to Timothy, and in him to all Gospel Ministers, as these whose proper Work is to perform publick Worship, and to give Direction to others from the Word, concerning their Worship. 2. *With the Discipline and Government of his House.* Hence they are called Rulers or Guides, 1 Thess. 5. 12. Heb. 13. 7, 17, 24. And Elders, 1 Tim. 5. 17. 1 Pet. 5. 1. The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven, not only the Key of Doctrine, but of Discipline, with the Power of Binding and Lousing, that is, the Stewardly Ministerial Power of Retaining and Remitting Sins, were committed by the Lord Jesus Christ, to the Apostles, and their Successors in the Ministry, to the end of the World: As is clear from these Scriptures compared together Mat. 16. 19. and 18. 18, 19, 20. and 28. 20. This Trust of the Discipline and Government of the Church, is also implied in these Commands that enjoin the Members of the Church to yeeld Obedience to their Ministers in the Exercise thereof. Hebr. 13, 7, 17. As also in the manifold Directions and Encouragements given to Ministers, with reference to their Work, in the Exercise of the Discipline and Government of the Church; As in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

3. Ministers are Entrusted with the Precious Souls of People. Its said Heb. 13, 17. That they must give an accompt of Souls; and where there is an Accompt to be given, there is a Trust committed. Several Titles given to Ministers imply so much. They are called Bishops or Overseers. Acts 20, 28. Pastors or Shepherds. Jerem. 3, 15. Ephes. 4, 11. Watchmen. Jerem. 6, 17. Isa. 62, 6. Ezek. 33, 7. Stewards. 1 Cor. 4, 1. They have the oversight of the Flock (1 Pet. 5, 2.) to watch over them, for the seasonable supply of their necessities, by Feeding and Ruling them.

Second: I proceed to shew, by whom these things are committed to the Trust of Ministers. And I Answer, That they are committed to them by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Sole King and Head of His Church. It is He that enables Men, , and puts them into the Ministry.

stery. 1, Tim. 1. 11, 12. This is sometimes ascribed to God the Father, as Tit. 1. 3. ----- Through Preaching, which is committed unto me, according to the Commandment of God our Saviour. Where by God our Saviour, we are to understand, not our Lord Jesus Christ, but God the Father, who also is the Saviour of lost Sinners, by sending his Son to Save them: For he had shewed already that he was called by Jesus Christ, ver. 1. And here he sheweth that he had his Call and Commission from the Father also. This is clear from that Paralel place. 1 Tim. 1. 1. Paul an Apostle of Jesus Christ, by the Commandment of God our Saviour; Or by the will of God, as he expresseth it in 1 Cor. 1. 1. 2 Cor. 1. 1. Ephes. 1. 1. Collos. 1. 1. 2 Tim. 1. 1. Hence it is that in asserting his Calling, he joins both the Father and the Son. Gal. 1. 1. Paul an Apostle ----- by Jesus Christ, and God the Father. We find this ascribed also to the Holy Ghost. Act. 20. 28. Take heed therefore unto your selves, and to all the Flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers.

We may conceive the matter thus.

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ as Mediator, is given by the Father to be the Head over all things to the Church. Ephes. 1. 22. The Government is laid on his shoulders. Isa. 9. 6, 7. And all Power and Authority is delegated to Him by the Father, to Rule and Govern the Church. Joh. 3. 35. and 5. 22. Mat. 28. 18. And this is called the Fathers will, or Command to Christ.

2. Our Lord Jesus, being thus cloathed with Power and Authority, hath instituted the Government of His Church, and given Laws for the Administration thereof, and appointed certain Ordinances for the Churches Edification, and hath entrusted all these to certain Officers appointed by Himself, of which number are Pastors and Teachers Mat. 28. 18, 19, 20. All power is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth; go ye therefore, and teach all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And other Scriptures already quoted. And this being done by vertue of the Power and Authority delegated to him by the Father, hence it is that whatsoever Christ as Mediator hath done, in and about the Government of the Church, is done by the

he, hath given some Pastors and Teachers. And 1 Cor. 12. 28, he hath set some in the Church, Teachers. And he hath given Directions concerning their Qualifications, as we see in 1 Tim. 3. 1. ---8 and Tit. 1. 5. ---10.

2. To this Office he hath annexed that great Trust I have spoken of; The Glorious Gospel, the matters of Gods House, and the precious Souls of People. Only, we are to remember, that matters of meer Order are committed to Ministers, separatly by themselves; And matters of Jurisdiction are committed to them, conjunctly with Ruling Elders. I say, saving this Distinction, this great Trust I mentioned, is Annexed by Christ to the Office of the Ministry.

3. Christ Jesus hath given Power and Authority to his Ministers, to separat and set apart others, Nominate and Elected by the Church, to the said Office and Function, according to certain Rules and Constitutions, laid down by Himself in His Word. Accordingly, Timothy was ordained, by the laying on of the Apostles Hands, and of the Hands of the Presbytery. 1 Tim. 4. 14. and 2 Tim. 1. 6. And he enjoins Timothy, and in him all Gospel Ministers. 2 Tim. 2. 2. *The things that thou hast heard of me among many Witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.* So that although the Institution of the Office of the Ministry be from Christ immediatly; Yet the separation and setting apart of particular persons for the said Office; is from men; But such Men as are authorised by Christ himself for that effect; And these men are not left to their own Liberty in this matter, but are strictly bound to certain Rules and Constitutions, for the observation whereof they are accomptable to their great Lord and Master.

4. Hence it follows, that such as are, in the orderly way appointed by Christ, separated and set apart for the Work of the Ministry, do directly and immediatly fall under the binding Authority of the Lord Jesus, with respect to the great Trust annexed by him to the said Office: And their Commission from Christ, with respect to the whole of that Trust, is as valid, as if Christ had immediatly by Himself, concrated the same to them by Name and Surname: So that they derive their Power and Authority for the management of this Trust, solely from the Lord Jesus Christ, though it be by the Intervention of Men.

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Will and Command of the Father; And particularly the entrusting His Ministers with these great Things I have already mentioned. Christ as Mediator hath committed these Things to their Trust, by the Commandment of God the Father. Tit. 1. 3.

3. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as Mediator and Head of the Church, did upon His Ascension, *Receive Gifts for Men. Psal. 68. 18.* That is, a Fulness of the promised Spirit (*Act. 2. 33.*) That by powering forth of the same, he might furnish his Ministers with sufficient Gifts, for the right management of that weighty Trust He hath committed unto them. The Gifts which He bestowed on His Ministers, are the prime and chief of all these Gifts, which He received: Therefore the Apostle instanceth mainly in these. *Ephes. 4. 8. 11. When he ascended up on high, he led Captivity captive, and gave Gifts unto Men. And he gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers.* With respect to this it is that Ministers are said to be made Overseers of the Flock by the Holy Ghost. *Act. 20. 28.* And they may be truly said to have that weighty Trust committed to them by Him; Because they are inwardly called by the Holy Ghost, Gifted and Qualified by Him for the management of it.

Third: Let us see, how these Things come to be committed by Jesus Christ, unto the Trust of such Men as are now set apart for the Work of the Ministry. The Ground of the doubt is, because none are now Called by Christ immediatly; All are called and set apart mediately by men; How then are they Entrusted by Christ?

For Answer to this. The Apostles indeed were Entrusted by Christ immediatly, and furnished by Him, with extraordinary Gifts. But now, Ministers have that great Trust committed to them, by a Power derived and delegated from Christ. They have not like Authority as the Apostles had; yet the Substance of their Commission, and of their Work is the same. Divines do usually distinguish here, between the *Donation of the Office* it self, vested with such Authority and Power, and the *Designation of particular Persons to this Office.* I humbly offer my Thoughts in these plain Words.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ, as the sole King and Head of the Church, hath entrusted the Office of the Ministry. This was one of the triumphant Trophees of his Ascension. *Ephes. 4. 8. 11. Christ, says he,*

Fourth: I proceed to shew, what the committing these Things to the Trust of Ministers doth imply. And it implyeth these Things following.

1. *That Ministers are his Servants.* Its true, *Christ Jesus* Himself is, as the Head of the Church, entrusted by the *Father*, with all the Affairs and concerns of the House of God: But he was entrusted, as a Son over his own House, Ministers only as Servants in the House; He as Lord and King, they as Officers under Him. The Apostle teacheth us so, when he assigns this difference between *Christ* and *Moses*, *Heb. 3. 5, 6.* *And Moses verily was faithful in all his House, as a Servant - - - But Christ as a Son over his own House.* *Moses* indeed, was a Son of God, by Adoption; yet he was no more but a Servant in the House of God, by Office. But the *Lord Jesus Christ*, though he was the *Fathers* Servant in His Work as Mediator; yet he was more than a Servant; he was a Son and Lord over his own House. Being God equal with the *Father*, he became a Servant by his own voluntary Condescension; And upon the doing of the *Fathers* will, he had the Honour given him of being the Head and Lord over his own House, and as such is entrusted with all the Affairs thereof, see *Philip. 2. 6, 7, 8, 9.* But Ministers have this Trust committed to them, only as Servants, under *Christ* their great Lord and Master. *Moses* himself the great Lawgiver, was no more but a Servant in the House of God. The Apostles, though they were Servants in a different way from other Ministers, in respect both of the manner of their Calling, and of the extent of their Power; yet they were no more but Servants. *2 Cor. 4. 5.* *We preach not our selves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and our selves your Servants for Jesus sake.* The best Ministers that ever were, were no more. We reckon it our great Honour that we are so, and do utterly disclaim all dominion over the Faith and Consciences of the People of God. *2 Cor. 1. 24.* *Not for that we have dominion over your Faith, but are helpers of your Joy.*

2. This is Implied, *that Ministers have a Commission from the Lord Jesus Christ to undertake and manage this Trust.* It is not a Trust which they take up at their pleasure, but a Trust committed, which supposeth a Commission. Though a Man have competent Abilities and Qualifications; yet this will not Warrant him to take upon him any Office of publick Trust, far less an Office of the

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Highest Trust in the Nation, without the King or Queens Commission, or a Commission from them that are clothed with Authority by the Supreme Powers for that Effect. So it is here. The Apostle plainly sheweth, *Tit. 1. 3.* That he did not Dispense the Gospel of his own Head, or out of a Voluntary Motion of his own; nor was it Ambition, nor outward Want that urged him thereunto: But that the Dispensation thereof was a Trust committed to him, and that according to the Commandment of GOD our Saviour. So that no Man hath any thing to do with this Trust, but by vertue of a Commission from *Christ*. Others are but Intruders, of whom it cannot be said, that *Christ* hath committed this Trust to them; And such Intruders are guilty of a Sacrilegious Usurpation. Even *Christ* himself, as Mediator and Head of the Church, had a Commission from the *Father*; How much more necessary is it that Men have a Commission from *Christ*? Such a Commission is necessary, not only to Warrant our Intromission with this great Trust, but also, that we may warrantably and confidently trust in *God*, for his Conduct and Blessing in the Management of it; That we may be thereby Armed against Satan, who will spy out and improve our want of a Commission; And that the Sense of our Commission from *Christ* may constrain us to Diligence and Faithfulness, and Support us against Difficulties and Dangers in the Management of this Trust.

3. It is here Implied, *That Ministers have much Work carved out for them in the House of GOD.* A great Truth cannot be Managed without great Labour, Diligence and Application. *Christ* keepeth no Servants only to wear a Livery. They have a weighty Trust, which requires great Labour and Diligence in the Management of it. The Great *LORD* and *Master* doth not send His Servants into the Vineyard, to rest and sleep there, nor to eat the Grapes and fill themselves, but to Work and Labour until the Evening.

4. This is Implied here, *that there are Directions given to Ministers by the LORD JESUS CHRIST, for the Management of the Duties of their Office, which Directions are punctually to be Observed by them.* Where ever there is a Trust committed, Men are not left to their own Liberty, but are to observe the Directions given them by him who committed that Trust to them. So it is here. Ministers have not only a Commission from *CHRIST*, but Instructions also: And

as *Moses* did nothing in the House of GOD but what he was Com-
manded, and made nothing but according to the Patern shewed
him in the Mount; So, the Commission which Ministers have from
CHRIST, doth not Warrant them to do any thing in the Affairs
of the House of GOD, but according to their Instructions from him,
Teach them (says our LORD, *Matth.* 28. 20.) *All Things whatso-
ever I have commanded you.* And no more. Ministers may not act,
come or go, in the Matters of GOD, at their own pleasure, nor at
the pleasure of any Mortal; But are to Regulate themselves by the
Will and Pleasure of their Great LORD and Master, who hath com-
mitted this Trust unto them.

5. This also is Implied, *that Ministers are Accomptable to the
LORD JESUS CHRIST; for their Management in his Matters.*
They are committed to their Trust; And where there is a Trust
committed, there will be an Accompt sought. Ministers are not
Owners, but *Stewards of the Mysteries of GOD*; not Lords, but Ser-
vants; And therefore are Accomptable for what they do. They
must give an Accompt to the Chief Shepherd, *1 Pet.* 5. 4. There
is a Day of Solemn Reckoning coming, when *CHRIST* will say,
give an Accompt of your Stewardship, *Luk.* 16. 2. It is true, they
are Accomptable even to lawful Church Judicatories whereof they
are Members, *For the Spirits of the Prophets are subject to the Prophets,*
1 Cor. 14. 32. But they are chiefly Accomptable to *CHRIST*
Himself. They must give an Accompt of all they do in the Matters
of GOD, and with what Faithfulness and Diligence they Manage
the Trust committed to them, and an Accompt of the Souls commit-
ted to their Charge, *Heb.* 13. 17.

Fifthly, I go on to shew, *why the LORD JESUS CHRIST would
commit so great a Trust to poor frail Men.* Seing the Trust is so great
and weighty, why would he not rather Rule and Govern the
Church, and Manage these weighty Matters, immediately by
Himself, by his own Power and Spirit? And if he would use Instru-
ments, why would he not much rather employ glorious Angels,
than frail sinful Men? We may condescend on these Reasons.

1. *Christ* would commit so great a Trust to Men, *that he might
Magnify his own Power,* in Preserving and Maintaining his own Or-
dinances, and in making them effectual for his own gracious Ends.

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The more contemptible the Instruments be, his Divine Power appears the more Glorious, in using them for such Noble and Blessed Ends. It doth plainly appear, what Reason God had to Provide for his own Glory in this Matter, if we consider how prone People are to idolize the Gifts of such as seem to be more Eminent in the Church. If we are so apt to idolize the Gifts of frail sinful Men, what would we have done, if this Trust had been committed to Glorious Angels? Therefore God useth such weak Instruments, that we may not look too much to them, and that the Successful Management of so great a Trust may appear to be of God; That the Maintaining and Preserving of all these Ordinances, and the Efficacy of them upon the Hearts of People, may be known to be from him alone. To this purpose the Apostle speaketh, 2 Cor. 4. 7. *We have this Treasure in Earthen Vessels, that the Excellency of the Power may be of GOD, and not of Us.* Considering the Weakness and Infirmary of the Instruments, and the great Opposition made to them by Satan and his Emissaries, and the frequent and vigorous Assaults made upon the Great Things committed to their Trust; It is a Wonder how the Kingdom and Interests of *Jesus Christ* are Supported and Prosper; That the Doctrine, Worship, and Government of his House, are at any time preserved in Purity; And that any poor Souls are preserved from utter Ruin. When such admirable Effects are brought about, by the Management of such weak Instruments; Certainly the Hand of the *Lord* is manifest in all this, and we must say, *it is the Lords doing.*

2. *Christ* hath committed this great Trust unto Men, because *they have Experience of the Wants, Miseries, Dangers and Temptations of poor Souls*, to Engage them to Tenderness and Compassion, and to excite them to Watchfulness and Diligence, in keeping the Souls of People, and in keeping other Things committed to them for their sake. Likeness of Condition is wont to breed Sympathy. Hence the *Lord* says to his People, after they had been Sojourners in the Land of *Egypt*, Exod. 23. 9. *Ye know the Heart of a Stranger.* Ministers themselves being poor Sinners, they may know the Heart of a Sinner the better, and consequently are the more fit to Treat poor Sinners with Pity and Compassion.

3. *Christ* would commit so great a Trust unto frail Men, be-
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cause they are greatly concerned in the Things committed to their Trust, as well as other Men. When a Mans own Interest is concerned, this useth to engage his Care. Will not that Pilot look well how he steers the Ship, who himself hath a great Adventure in it? So here, Ministers cannot be Unfaithful in Managing the Trust committed to them, unless they wrong their own Souls, and put their own Salvation to Hazard. Their eternal Concerns are upon the same Bottom, with the eternal Concerns of other Men, to sink or swim with them. If this Gospel go, if the precious Ordinances be corrupted, then their Souls are in Danger as well as the Peoples.

4. Christ hath committed so great a Trust unto Men, because He will sometimes be Honoured by their Sufferings. The Sufferings of Faithful Ministers contribute much to the Glory of GOD, and the Advantage of the Gospel: Others become more Bold and Courageous, in Owning and Avowing these Precious Truths for which they Suffer; As the Apostle sheweth, *Phil. 1. 12, 13, 14.* Angels would not be capable of Sealing the Truth with their Blood: Therefore our Lord Jesus would employ Men, that he might sometimes take Occasion to pick out some of them for Martyrs, to make Truth shine the more Gloriously. Some look on these Words, *2 Cor. 4. 7. We have this Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, as an Allusion to Gideons Lamps which were within the Pitchers. When the Pitchers of the frail Bodies of Ministers are broken by Sufferings, then the Glory of Gospel Truths shineth forth, even to the Amazement of Enemies. Hence it is that the Lord hath usually called his Servants to Bloody Sufferings, when he had been using them in the Reformation of a Church, or in upholding the Interests of pure and true Religion, in a time of great Defection.

5. Our LORD JESUS would commit so great a Trust unto Men, that he might Try and Exercise the Humility, Submission and Obedience of the Members of the Church. If the glorious Gospel, and the Ordinances of the House of GOD had been entrusted to Angels, then Submission and Obedience might seem to be more easy. But now there are many that despise these Ordinances, because of the Meanness and Weakness of those to whom they are entrusted: But remember, that GOD doth hereby try Your Humility and submissive Obedience, who are Members of the Church, if ye can regard
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and submit to these Ordinances, as GODS Institutions, though dispensed by weak Men; And respect these Men for their Works sake, though in other Respects they may be inferiour to you. Certainly, it is a great Tryal of Sincerity, when ye are not prejudiced against the Institutions of GOD, because of the Meanness of those to whom they are entrusted.

Sixthly, I come in the Last Place to Apply this Doctrine.

Use 1. I shall in the first Place, draw some Inferences from this Doctrine, by way of *Instruction*. And,

1. It follows from this Doctrine, *that Ministers ought to be Men of competent Abilities*. There is a great Trust committed to them, therefore they ought to be duely Qualified for the Management of it. I shall venture to say, that nothing can be of more Dangerous Consequence to the Church of GOD, than the entrusting the Matters of His House to Unqualified Men. They ought to be well Skilled in the Mysteries of the Gospel, and in the Discipline and Government of the House of GOD, and Men of great Piety, Zeal, Prudence, and Faithfulness. The Apostle hath a Word to this purpose in 1 *Thess.* 2. 4. *We were allowed of GOD to be put in Trust with the Gospel.* The Word rendred *allowed*, signifieth *to be approven and judged fit*. Before a Man be put in Trust with the Gospel, Inquiry is first to be made, and Tryal taken, if he be fitted by the LORD for so great a Trust. They should be *Faithful Men*, to whom Ministers commit what is entrusted to them, 2 *Tim.* 2. 2. And they should *Lay Hands suddenly on no Man*, 1 *Tim.* 5. 22. It is true, the Necessities of the Church may be great; But as we use to say, *that is soon enough, that is well enough*. Indeed the best of us have reason to Blush, when we consider, how unfit we are for this great Trust; Yet there ought to be a Competency of Gifts and Abilities, and we have great Cause to give all Diligence to increase our Gifts.

2. It follows from this Doctrine, *that it is not in the power of Ministers, to Demitt the Exercise of their Ministry at their pleasure*. For they are entrusted, by the LORD JESUS, with the Gospel, and the Precious Souls of People. As they did not take this Trust upon them, so they may not lay it down at their pleasure. It is a Trust committed to them, and bound upon them, by the Authority of the

the **LORD JESUS**, which obligeth them to continue their Faithfulness and Diligence, till their Great *Lord* and *Master* come and take their Accompts, *1 Tim. 4. 16. Take heed unto thy self, and unto thy Doctrine: Continue in them*. These Words, *continue in them*, are to be referred, not only to the Words immediately proceeding, but to *ver. 13. and 14.* where the Apostle exhorts him, and all Ministers, to Diligence in the Duties of their Function. So that it is not in the Power of Ministers to discontinue or demitt the Exercise of their Ministry at their pleasure. Nor is it in the Power of any *Man*, nor of any Society of *Men* in the World, to accept of such a Demission from a Minister, or to Loose him from the great Trust, that is bound upon him by the Authority of *Christ*. Yet this derogates nothing from that Power and Authority, wherewith the *Lord Jesus* hath invested the Officers of the Church, in their lawful Judicatories and Assemblies; to Try, Judge, and Censure, even to Deposition, such Ministers as are either Ignorant, or Erroneous, or Scandalous, or Supinely Negligent, or nottourly Unfaithful in the great Trust committed to them. Therefore, we are to remember, that although Ministers have their Commission solely from *Jesus Christ*; yet it is by the Intervention of Men, who are by the *Lord Jesus* constitute Judges of their Ministerial Abilities and Qualifications.

3. It followeth from this Doctrine, that *the Office of the Ministry is very Honourable*. There is a Great and Honourable Trust annexed to it. Whatever our Persons are, yet ye must give us leave to *magnify our Office, Rom. 11. 13.* Ministers are engaged in a Glorious Service. They are entrusted with the glorious Gospel, with the precious Jewels of *Christ's* Crown, with his Royal Prerogatives, with the Weighty Matters of His House and Kingdom, and the precious Souls of People. Such an Honour was never conferred on any Angel. The *Ambassadors*, the *Stewards*, the *Treasurers* of great Kings and Princes, are Persons of great Honour, and have an Honourable Trust: But Ministers are the great *Trusties* of the Greatest Monarch that ever was, even of him who is the *KING of Kings*, and *LORD of Lords*. They are his *Ambassadors*, *2 Cor. 5. 20.* His *Stewards*, *1 Cor. 4. 1.* His *Treasurers*, *2 Cor. 4. 7.* The Things they are entrusted with, are Things dearest to *Christ* in all the World,

World, and Things of greatest Concernment to his Glory. The highest Trust in the World cannot paralel this. Hence the Apostle exhorts People to *esteem them very highly in Love for their Works sake*, 1 Thess. 5. 13. Many think the Office of the Ministry too mean and base a Calling for their Children: But the best and chiefest of all your Family, is not good enough for such an Honourable Trust, which is the Greatest that can be committed to any Creature.

4. It is also clear from this Doctrine, *that the Ministerial Work is a Work of great Labour and Difficulty*. As the Trust is Honourable, so is it Weighty. The Things committed to our Trust are of great Worth and Value: There is great Danger of miscarrying in the Management of this Trust, whether we look within, to our own Hearts; or to the many Difficulties and Discouragements, Oppositions and Temptations we have to wrestle with from without: And Miscarriages here, are of Dangerous Consequence, both to our own Souls, and to the Souls of People. So that there is a great deal of Holy Care and Solitude, Diligence and close Application, required in the Management of this Trust. The Work of Preaching alone, is a very uptaking Work, enough to take up all a Man's Time and Study; that he may Preach seasonably and suitably to the various cases and Conditions of Souls; that he may find out acceptable Words, and wrestle with GOD for his Direction, Assistance, and Blessing, and be instant in Season, and out of Season, &c. yet there is a great deal of other work required of Ministers, in the discharge of the great Trust committed to them; And they are enjoined not only to do it, but to do it well, with much Holy Care, Diligence, Sincerity, Zeal, and Faithfulness. O what Labour and Difficulty there is here! Hence it is that many of GOD'S Faithful Servants have undertaken this Work with much Trembling, and Reluctancy: As Moses, Exod. 4. 13. *Send I pray thee by the hand of him whom thou wilt send*. And Jeremiah, Jer. 1. 6. *Ah, LORD GOD, behold, I cannot speak, for I am a Child*. And the Apostle cries out, and surely we have far more Reason, *who is sufficient for these things?* 2 Cor. 2. 16.

5. We see from this Doctrine, *That Ministers are great Objects of Christian Pity and Compassion*. To clear this.

(1.) Consider

(1.) Consider the greatness and weight of this Trust that is committed to us. There are no greater mysteries than these that are entrusted to us. One Soul is of more value than Ten Thousand Worlds, and yet a great multitude of them are committed to every Minister.

(2.) Consider who and what we are, to whom this great Trust is committed. We are but men, and these none of the Wisest and most Learned, in the esteem of the World. We have no stronger Shoulders than ye have. We are frail weak men; Poor Earthen Vessels; men of like Passions with you; subject to many Weaknesses; Compassed with Infirmities; And have a Body of Death in us as well as ye have.

(3.) Consider the many Temptations, Difficulties, and Oppositions we have to wrestle with, both from Satan and the Wicked World, as well as from our own Hearts. We are more the Butt of Satans Malice than ye are: He stands at our Right Hand to resist us. *Zechar. 3. 1.* We are the Eye-sore of wicked and prophane Men. We are as a City set on an Hill: From what Airth soever Temptations blow, they come on us.

(4.) Consider the strict Accompt that will be required of us, when that time shall come, which hastens apace, that we shall be no longer *Stewards*.

Well then, may not all this melt the Hearts of People into tender Compassion? And, Oh, *my very Reverend Bretheren*, shall not all this astonish and awaken our own Hearts? The Lord himself pity us, and help us. There is not a greater Object of tender Pity and Compassion in all the World, than a poor Minister.

6. From this Doctrine *we may discover the reason why Satan sets himself so much against Ministers.* We have a great Trust committed to us; and Satan well knoweth how much depends upon the right or wrong Management of it. Therefore, we are subject to more Temptations, and have more Snares laid for us than ye have; yea such Temptations, that ye who are People are not acquainted with. The Devil shoots most at honest Ministers, because they are *set for the defence of the Gospel. Phil. 1. 17.* Like Soldiers in the Front of the Battel, that have all the Bullets flying about their Ears. *We are not ignorant of his Devices,* says the Apostle. *2 Cor. 2, 11.* But who knoweth all the Devices that Satan

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tan useth against Ministers. He sometimes seeketh to Discourage us, so that we are, like *Jonah*, ready to run away from our Charge. He Tempts us, sometimes to Pride, Selfseeking, and Ambitious Affectation, that we may fall into the Condemnation of the Devil; Sometimes to Selfconceit and Selfconfidence, that he may weaken our Trust and Dependence on our Blessed Master; Sometimes to Unfaithfulness and Lukewarmness in the matters of God; And sometimes to Imprudent Management in our Masters Work, &c. And O, what corrupt matter there is in us for his Temptations to work upon! The Lord pity us.

7. We see from this Doctrine, what is the chief Qualification, required in Gospel-Ministers, and that is Faithfulness. Faithfulness respects Trust. Such as have a great Trust, must see to it that they be Faithful. The two principal Qualifications, required in God's Steward, are Wisdom and Faithfulness. Luk. 12, 42. But Faithfulness hath the preheminance. 1 Cor. 4. 2. Moreover it is required in Stewards, that a man be found Faithful. Other things are required also, but this chiefly. Our great Lord and Master was a pattern to us in this, He was Faithful to Him that appointed Him. Heb. 3. 2. And it was *Moses* his great Commendation, He was Faithful in all God's House, as a Servant. v. 5. Hence Ministers are Exhorted to committ what is entrusted to them, to Faithful Men. 2 Tim. 2, 2. And the Apostle Paul blesteth the Lord Jesus Christ; that He compted him Faithful, putting him into the Ministry. 1 Tim. 1. 12. Faithfulness is a very comprehensive Qualification. Though we have not so much Learning, nor so great Natural or acquired Parts, as other Men have; Yet if wee be Faithful to Christ Jesus, this will supply many wants. What this Faithfulness is, wherein it consists, and how it must be qualified, is not proper for me to discourse of at this time: And I hope some of them have not lost your sweet Saviour and Relish of a very worthy Discourse ye heard to this purpose, a few Years ago, from these Words in 1 Cor. 4, 2.

Use 2d. I shall next improve this Doctrine, by way of Exhortation; And I give a threefold Exhortation from it.

First. My First Exhortation is to you who are the People. And

1. Have pity upon us, O our Friends. We are not Angels, but poor frail Men: And we have a weighty Trust, for your Souls, that

that will sink our Souls Eternally, if we be not Faithful. Therefore, in my *Masters* Name, and in the Name of all my Reverend Bretheren I call for (and if I could, I would beg with Tears) your tender Christian Pity and Compassion.

2. *Pray for us.* How often doth the Apostle *Paul* call for this from these to whom he Writes: And if he had need of the Prayers of People, surely we have far more. Our Faithfulness in this great Trust, depends on the Influence of God's Grace, and the Help of his Spirit; And our Success in the management thereof, depends upon His Blessing. O then, Pray, Pray, that we may obtain Mercy of the Lord, to be Diligent and Faithful, and that he would Bless and Prosper His own Work in our Hands. Ye never Pray better for your selves, then when ye Pray to purpose for your Ministers.

3. *Help us.* O, what can we do? may ye say. Very much. Take great care of your own Souls; be careful of the Souls of your Children and Servants; and strive together for the Faith of the Gospel: And then ye make our *Masters* Work the easier to our Hand.

4. *Carry toward us as the Trustees and Stewards of the Lord Jesus.* Receive the Message that we are entrusted to deliver; study a chearful Submission and Subjection to all *Christs* Ordinances; and look on the Lord *Jesus Christ* as your Party.

Second: My Second Exhortation is to such of you as intend the Ministry, whether Students or Probationers.

1. Consider what a weighty Trust ye are designing to undertake; and sit down and compt the Cost, how ye will be able to go through with it. It is a great Trust, a Trust formidable to the very Angels: And ye had need to consider of it aforehand, that when once ye have put your Hand to God's Pleugh, ye may not not look back again; and that ye may enter on this great Trust, with much Holy Fear and Trembling, a Holy Diffidence of your selves, a deep sense of your own utter Insufficiency for the Management of it, and a humble Dependance on the Lord *Jesus*. Yet

2. Let not the Consideration of the greatness and weight of this Trust discourage you. For, if ye singly design the Glory and Honour of God, the Advancement of the Mediators Kingdom, and the Edification and Salvation of the Souls of people; Then know, that ye are

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to serve a *Good Master*, who hath promised to be with you, to Furnish, Assist and Bless you; And ye are to serve Him in a Glorious and Good Work, which being Faithfully managed through Grace, will yeild you the sweetest Peace, and the greatest Reward, of any other Work in the World.

3. *Be Diligent to attain a large measure of these Gifts and Graces, that are necessary for the right management of so great a Trust.* Search the Scriptures. Study the good word of God, that it may dwell Richly in you. Get much experience of the Truths of God upon your own Heart. Ply your Studies hard. Be much in Prayer; For the God of all Grace can make all Grace abound to you. Study Faithfulness in employing your Talents for God, as ye have a Call and opportunity; For if ye be not Faithful in little, ye will never be Faithful in much. And lastly, converse much with God, and with your own Hearts.

Third: In the *third* place, I turn my self to you *my very Reverend Bretheren and Fathers.* Though I be the most unworthy; yet may I venture upon a word of Exhortation to you, in the Discharge of this Trust, which ye your selves, in your *Masters* Name, have put upon me? But I need make no Apology to you, who teach others, to regard the Message more than the Messenger. Therefore I proceed.

1. Let us see here, and Tremble; O, *let us Tremble at the great Trust that is committed to us, and the heavy Charge deposited in our Hands!* O, what Ground there is for much Holy Trembleing! Let us be often thinking, yea let us have deep and ponderous Thoughts of this great Trust, that we may have a deep sense of the great weight of it upon our own Hearts.

2. *Let us often reflect on our Management of this great Trust.* I am confident that many of my Reverend Bretheren can reflect on their Management in the Work of the LORD with some Comfort, and have the Testimony of a good Conscience, bearing Testimony to their Faithfulness in the main: But Oh, have not all, even the best of us, much Reason to Reflect with Shame, Greive and Sorrow, on our great and many Failings and Shortcomings? Have we not often dishonoured our Blessed Lord and Master, when we were called to glorify Him? Have we not given many wrong touches to the Ark of God, either through our Luke-warmness and Indiffe-

rency, or through our imprudent management? Have we not often wronged poor Souls, or denied that help to them, that we ought and might have given? What Reason have we to Pray with the *Psalmist*, though with a different sense and meaning. *Psal. 51. 14. Deliver me from Blood guiltiness, O God, thou God of my Salvation.* The Lord cleanse us from the Guilt of the Blood of Souls. Oh, let us lament the Sins of our Ministry. Let every man of us search and try his own Heart and Way.

3. *Let us take heed to whom we commit this great Trust.* Let us commit the same to *Faithful Men*, *2 Tim. 2. 2.* Let us not betray the Interest of our Blessed Master into the Hands of unfaithful men. Let us entrust them to none, but such of whom we have sufficient ground to believe, that they will be faithful to *Jesus Christ*.

4. *Let us take heed that we do nothing unworthy of our place and Office.* Take heed unto thy self, and unto thy Doctrine *1 Tim. 4. 16.* Take heed to your Words and Actions, that you say and do nothing, that may be dishonourable to the Lord *Jesus*, or blemish the Dignity of your Office. Study to be like Your Master, and to appear like the *Trusties and Stewards of Christ*. This will make way for your esteem, though ye may be mean for Birth, and young for Age. *Let no man despise thy youth. 1 Tim. 4. 12.* Oh, Let us not be a Disgrace to our dear Lord and Master, and let us not bring a Blott upon our Office; Let us have the Dignity of our Office alwayes in our Eye, that we may not stain it by any base and unworthy Practice.

5. *Let us study much Holy Boldness and Confidence in the work of the Ministry.* We have *Christs* own Call and Commission to be employed therein. The Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government of the House of God, and the precious Souls of People, are committed to our Trust, by Him that hath Sovereign Power and Authority in the Church; And to Him we must give an Account. *Ambassadors* and *Stewards* are bold and confident, in the management of Things committed to their Trust. They Act boldly, who can shew the King or Queens Commission. How much more may we be bold in the Lord, who have our Commission from him that is higher than the Highest? While we are about the Dutys of our Office, and keep within the compass of our Calling, we need not be afraid of being esteemed Intruders. Therefore, let the Remembrance of
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our Trust animate us to our Duty, and encourage us against all the Dangers to which we may be exposed, and all the Oppositions and unjust Reflections, we may meet with from Wicked Men, as if we took too much upon us.

6. *Let us see to it, that we keep that which is committed to our Trust.* This brings me to.

The Second Doctrine, That, *it is the necessary and indispensable Duty of all Gospel-Ministers, to keep that which Christ hath committed their Trust.*

2 Tim. 1. 14. *That good Thing which was committed unto thee, keep, by the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in us.*

Here I shall shew.

1. *In what respects we must keep them.*
2. *By what means we must keep them.*
3. *In what manner we should keep them.*
4. *Why we should keep them.*

And Lastly, I shall Apply the Doctrine.

First. *In what Respects must we who are Ministers keep these Things that are committed to our Trust.*

1. We must keep them *that they be not lost or taken away.*

(1.) We must keep the *Precious Souls of People*, by defending them from Ravening Wolves; from Satan who seeketh to devour and make a Prey of them; And from his Ministers, Hereticks and Prophane Persons, who are ready to draw them away to their pernicious Ways: By reclaiming them from their Wanderings, and bringing them home to Jesus Christ. Ezek. 34. 4.

(2.) We must keep the *Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government of the House of God*, and see that none of the precious Interests of Christ be lost. 1. We must not give them away. We must not betray any of Christs Interests into the Hands of his Enemies, upon any account. 2. We must not suffer them to be taken away by others, by Hereticks, Sectaries, Erastians or Persecuters. We must not let the Gospel go, nor the Ordinances, nor any of the precious Truths of God; Nor suffer any of the Royal Prerogatives of Christ to be silently invaded. To this purpose our Lord speaketh to the Ministers, as well as the Professors of the Churches. Rev. 2. 24, 25. *But unto you, I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, - - - - I will put*

upon you none other Barden; but that which ye have already, hold fast till I come. Rev. 3. 3. Remember how thou hast received, and heard, and hold fast. and v. 11. Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy Crown. And saith the Apostle to Timothy, and to all Gospel Ministers in him. 2 Tim. 1. 13. Hold fast the form of sound Words. We must not let one hoof of Truth go. Though Devils and wicked Men should muster up all their Forces, to pull the Truths and Interests of *Christ* from us; yet we must hold all fast. We must not suffer any of the precious Interests of *Christ* to be lost or taken away, neither through our Negligence, or Unfairfulness, or undue Silence, or Lukewarmness, in the matters of God; nor yet by unseasonable venting of things, or imprudent management of our Trust.

2. We must keep the Things entrusted to us, that they be not corrupted. And

(1.) We must keep the *Precious Souls of People*, that they be not Infected or Corrupted, by Errors, or prophane and vicious Practices, and the infection of bad Examples. We must labour to get all these within our Charge, so brought to *Christ*, and preserved in Him, that they may be presented perfect in him at the last Day. Coll. 1. 28. And presented as chaste virgins to *Christ*. 2 Cor. 11. 2.

(2.) We must keep the *Doctrine* pure, that it be not Adulterated or Corrupted by Error; nor embased or moltified, by corrupt and unworthy mixtures, to makeway for the Compliance of any Dissenting Party. God hates and abhorres such mixtures, whereby Men halt between God and Baal, and Truth is made to speak half in the Language of *Ashdod* and half in the Language of *Canaan*.

(3.) We must keep God's *Worship and Ordinances* pure, that they be not Corrupted by Human Inventions; and that nothing be brought in or used, as a part of Worship, which is founded on the Commands of Men.

(4.) We must keep the *Discipline and Government* of the House of God, that they be not Corrupted, by Mens Foysting in any Thing, that is not agreeable to the patern laid down in the Word; And that there be no swerving from the Laws of *Christ*, in the Government of the Church; nor any Encroachment upon the Rights and Priviledges of the Church, in the Exercise thereof.

Second:

Second: Let us see in the next place, by what means we who are Ministers must keep these Things that are committed to our Trust. We must keep them,

1. By watching over all the Things entrusted to us. We must watch over the Souls of our People. *Heb. 13. 17.* For this End we should study to know and be acquainted with every person within our Charge, if possibly we can; And watch over every one of them, and inquire into their State; and study to know, so much as is possible, their Inclinations, Conversations, Sins, Temptations they are lyable unto, and the Dangers to which they are exposed. *Prov, 27. 23.* *Be thou diligent to know the state of thy Flocks, and look well to thy Herds.* And we must watch over all the Affairs of the House of God, and observe what Dangers threaten them. We must act the part of Watchmen and Overseers. We should be full of Eyes, like the Living Creatures about the Thron, to see before us and behind us.

2. By giving faithful warning of approaching Danger. We must, give warning of Dangers that threaten particular Souls, and that to every man, so far as possible. *Coll. 1. 18.* *Whom we preach, warning every man.* We must warn them of the Snares and Temptations of the Times, and of their Danger by Sin. *Ezek. 33. 7, 8.* And we must give warning to People of Dangers that threaten the Church, and the Interests of Religion. We must not be dumb Dogs, when Theeves attempt to Rob the House of God. If any Sin in a Minister be unpardonable (saith a Reverend Divine) it is silence.

3. By a conscientious Administration of all Gospel Ordinances, according to Christs Institution; As Stewards dispencc needful provision to the Family. Particularly by Preaching the Gospel; And that

(1.) Faithfully. Delivering nothing but what we have in Commission from Christ, that we may be able to say, *my Doctrin is not mine, but his that sent me.* *Joh. 7. 16.* And delivering all we have in Commission, even the whole Counsel of God *Act. 20. 27.* Withholding nothing for Fear or Favour, that is for the Edification of the people. *Act. 20. 20.*

(2.) Freely. We must not enslave or imprison the Truth, by our sinful Silence. *2 Tim. 2. 9.* *I suffer trouble as an evil Doer, even unto*

unto Bonds; but the Word of God is not bound. We must freely tell People their Sins; and thunder out the Judgements of God, against sleepy and secure Sinners. *Isa. 58. 1.*

(3.) *Plainly.* High strains of Witt, and Rhetorical Flourishes do not become the Gravity of a Minister. We must be *shining Lights Joh. 5. 35.* We should Preach to the Capacities of the People; and so plainly, as we may Preach Convincingly to the Hearts and Consciences of our Hearers.

(4.) *Zealously.* We should be, not only shining, but *burning Lights Joh. 5. 35.* Cold Preaching is dead and lifeless Preaching. We should Preach with Zeal and Affection, as having Experience of the Truths we Preach in our own Hearts.

(5.) *Seasonably.* As wise Stewards, we must give these in our Masters Family *their portion of meat in due season. Luk. 12. 42.* yet Truths, may be Seasonable, when carnal Reason, and the Interests of the Flesh say they are not. In this Sense, we must be *instant in season, and out of season. 2 Tim. 4. 2.* Let us always think what Christ Himself would say, if He were to Preach in our Parish.

(6.) *Boldly.* We read often of the Apostles, their Preaching boldly in the name of Christ. It is most unsuitable for the Ambassadors of Christ, to fear the face of Man, *Jerem. 1. 17. Ezek. 2. 6. and 3, 8, 9.* We have Gods promise for our Protection and Deliverance, in the faithful Discharge of our Duty. *Jerem. 1. 8. Be not afrayed of their Faces, for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.*

4. *By confuting and convinceing Gain-sayers. Tit. 1. 9.* When either Hereticks, or Prophane Persons, gain-say and contradict the Truth; We must not be silent, but resist them that resist the Truth, that it may go away a Conquerour, though it be against Kings, Princes and Rulers. We must drive away the Wolves, and not only establish the Truth, but oppose Errors and Heresies. Like *Nehemiah's* Builders, with one Hand we must work, and with another hold a Wappon.

5. *By watching and improving all opportunities to do good to Souls, and to advance the Interests of Christ. 2 Tim. 4. 2. Be instant in season, out of season.* All opportunities must be improven, for instructing the Ignorant, awakening the Secure, strengthening the Weak, healing the Sick, supporting the Tempted, comforting the Afflicted,

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ed, confirming the Strong, and studying to promote the increase and exercise of their Graces. And all Opportunities must be improved for promoting all the Interests and Concerns of the House of God. When Providence puts a fair Opportunity in our hand, if we let it slip, it may be of Lamentable Consequence. *Eccles. 8. 6. Because to every purpose there is Time and Judgement, therefore the misery of Man is great upon him.* We may easily lose such an opportunity, the like whereof may hardly, if ever be recovered.

6. By committing the Things Entrusted to us, to other Faithful Men; That when we are Dead, these Things may not perish with us, 2 Tim. 2. 2. I touched at this already.

7. By meeting together, in lawful Judicatories and Assemblies, to consult, Vote, and Determine, according to the Word, in these Things that concern the glory of God, and the Edification of the Church. This must be made Conscience of; And we must not look upon it as a Thing Arbitrary, to attend these Judicatories, or not, as we please. Our Duty to meet together in Christ's Name, is plainly implied in that Promise, *Matth. 18. 19, 20.* If at any time we withdraw unnecessarily, from these Judicatories of Christ whereof we are Members, the prejudice that the Interests of Christ may possibly sustain, either through their Negligence, or their wrong Management, is justly chargeable upon us.

8. By a Holy unanimity in the matters of God, *Mark 9. ult. Have Salt in your selves, and Peace one with another.* We should endeavour a Holy Peace with all Men, much more with one another. We should agree in the Matter we Preach, in Preaching the same Truths, and pressing the same Duties. And there ought to be a sweet Harmony, and a Holy Unanimity, in our Endeavours to promote the Interests of our Blessed Lord and Master. This would render the Ministry amiable, and commend it to the Consciences of People: It would also render our Labours more Successful: And our Strength and Safety lyeth in an Holy Union. It hath been often observed that Satan and his Instruments have gained much, and that the Interests of Christ have Suffered much Loss, by sad Divisions amongst Ministers.

9. By bearing publick Testimony to the Truth and ways of God against Error and Sin, when it may be for the Glory of God, and the Edification of
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the Church. This is a Duty chiefly incumbent to Ministers, upon the accompt of the great Trust committed to them. We are God's Witnesses, and a Witness should Declare what he knoweth, though before the greatest of Men. Especially let us bear witness to the Truth of the *Word of Christs Patience*, Rev. 3. 10. In all Ages there is a *Word of Christs Patience*; So called, because usually the Cross follows it, so that both Ministers and Professors who owne it, have great need of Patience. There is such a *Word of Christ's Patience* now: That *Christ* is the *Sole King and Head of his Church*; That he hath Instituted the Government of his House; and appointed His own Officers for the Administration thereof, *Pastors, Teachers, and Ruling Elders*; And that they derive their Power and Authority from Him alone, &c. Many snarle at, contradict, and malign these precious Truths; Though, *blessed be God*, the Supreme Powers keep a Restraint upon the Spirit of Persecution: But if the *Lord* calls us to bear publick Testimony to them, we must not draw back.

10. *By frequent and fervent Prayer.* Let us commit our selves, and the Souls of our People, and all the precious Interests of *Christ*, unto his own keeping; For if he keep them not, all our Labour will be in vain. O! let us be much in Prayer; and let us be fervent in it, striving and wrestling with *God* in Prayer. We would speed better, if we did Pray more. Some Ministers of meaner Gifts are more Successful, not because they Preach better, but Pray more.

Third, I proceed to shew *in what Manner we are to keep the Things committed to our Trust.*

1. We must keep them *with Diligence and close Application*, 1 Tim. 4. 15. *Give thy self wholly to them.* Our Trust is so great and weighty, and there are so many Difficulties in the Management of it, that nothing doth more unbecome us, than Idleness, Sloth and Laziness. There is much Work to take up our Time. I will not Condemn moderat lawful Recreation: But sure I am, there are special Obligations lying on us who are Ministers, even beyond others, to be very thrifty of our Time; Because it is less our own; none in all our Paroch but have a share in it.

2. We must keep them *with Holy Care and Solitude.* As the Care of all the Churches was upon *Paul*, 2 Cor. 11. 28. So, a Holy Care and Solitude about the Interest of *Christ*, and the precious
Souls

Souls of People, should be upon the Heart of every Gospel-Minister. Titus had an earnest Care for the Good of the *Corinthians*, 2 Cor. 8.

16. A Minister should be a very thoughty Man, O! *what will become of the Interests of Christ? What will become of such a poor Soul?* We should be careful even for these that do not care for themselves.

3. We ought to keep them *Earnestly*. Even private Christians should *contend earnestly for the Truth*, Jude verse 3. Much more Ministers. The Word in the Original Language signifies to *Labour fervently*, so as to put too all our Strength in the Contention. We must keep the Things entrusted to us, with all our Might and Vigour. Head, Heart and Hand, must be set a work; There must be an earnest and vehement Application of them, in the Management of our Trust. So Tit. 1. 9. *Holding fast the faithful Word*. The Word signifyeth to *hold against a contrary Hold*, as with both Hands. The *Pastors* and *Teachers* of the Church ought to be good at Holding and Drawing. The Word also signifyeth *to be tenacious*. Though Ministers should be of a very yeelding Temper, in Things indifferent, for Peace sake; yet they should be very tenacious in Points of Faith and Truth.

4. We ought to keep them *Tenderly*. As Men have a tender Care of their Jewels, that none of them be Lost. We should be Followers of God, who keeps His People *as the Apple of his Eye*, Zach. 2. 8. We should be very tender, lest we dishonour God, or wrong a poor Soul, or give the Ark of God a wrong Touch.

5. We must keep what is entrusted to us *Zealously*. Pauls Spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the City of Athens wholly given to Idolatry, Acts 17. 16. Ministers should be meek and merciful, but not to the prejudice of Holy Zeal. In Christ there was a notable Conjunction of both; *Learn of me, for I am meek*, says he, Matth. 11. 29. Yet how full was he of Holy Zeal for the House of God, Joh. 2. 14. ----- 17. How Zealous was meek Moses against the Idolatry of the Children of Israel. We ought to be Holy Impatient, when the Interests of Christ are in Danger. Neutrality and Indifferency in the Matters of God, is hateful in Professors, much more in Ministers. Let us remember how the Lord threatens the Ministers, as well as the Professors of the Church of Laodicea, Rev. 3. 16. *Because thou*

art Linke-warm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my Mouth.

6. Let us keep the Things entrusted to us *prudently*, that we betray not our Trust by our imprudent Management of it. I know, that as carnal Policy oft-times goeth under the name of Prudence; So Holy Prudence is oft-times named Carnal Policy. But the Affairs of the Kingdom of *Christ* have such a great Interest in the Prudence of His Ministers, that it is a pity that ever it should get so ill a name. Ministerial Prudence is very consistent with Faithfulness, *Luke 12. 42.* Such as make an outcry against Prudence, in the Management of the Affairs of the Church, do flee in the Face of the Lord *Jesus*, who hath expressly recommended it to his Ministers. *Matth. 10. 16.* Behold, I send you forth as Sheep in the midst of Wolves: Be ye therefore wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves. Prudence directs to the use of the most proper Means in the fittest Season. It is necessary, to time our Contentions and Appearances for the Truth, and to Regulate the Manner of them. We may greatly wrong our *Masters* Business, by our imprudent Management. Holy Prudence will teach us to observe all seasonable Circumstances in discovering our selves for *God*; Else our Zeal may produce very hurtful Effects, to the Dishonour of *God*, and the prejudice of the Interests of Religion. Yet we must take heed of forbearing necessary Duty, out of prudence, or being faint in the performance of it.

7. Let us manage our Trust *Faithfully*. We must not let one hoof of Faith go, or one Soul perish, if we can help it. Let us be faithful even in the least Things; For he that is unfaithful in little, will be unfaithful also in much. We must not neglect the least Duty, in its due and proper Season, be the Hazard what it will. Again, we must be faithful, in aiming singly at the Honour and Interests of our great Lord and Master, the welfare of the Church, and the Salvation of Souls; and not our own profit, Credit, or Honour. *Job. 7. 18.* He that seeketh his Glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. O how easily doth self wind in it self upon us!

8. We must keep the Things entrusted to us *Valiantly*, as fearing none but our Master, and nothing but Sin and Unfaithfulness. We must not fear the Face of Man. Valour and Courage becometh every

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every common Sentinel, much more an Officer: Now Ministers are as Officers in the Army. They are called to a Warfare. 2 Tim. 2. 3. *Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good Souldier of Christ.* Our Lords Commission should animate us with Holy Courage, Job. 1. 5, 6, 7. Let us not give way to our own Fears, but with an undaunted Courage, make our Faces hard against the Faces of the wicked, Ezek. 3. 8, 9.

9. We must keep what is entrusted to us *constantly*. Young Ministers are usually more warm and diligent, in the first years of their Ministry; But oft-times become more cold and remiss afterward. Hence the Apostle exhorts, 1 Tim. 4. 15, 16. *Meditate on these Things, give thy self wholly to them; ----- Continue in them.* And he chargeth Timothy, and in him all Gospel-Ministers, to keep this Commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Tim. 6. 14. Our Commission is Originally and fundamentally from Christ, and this Trust is committed to us during Life; Therefore having once put our hand to God's Plough, we must not look back, Rev. 2. 10. Keep up your Holy Care, Diligence, and Faithfulness, in well and wo, under all Changes and Casualties, even in the Face of Death and Danger.

Fourth. I come to shew why we who are Ministers should thus keep the Things that are committed to our Trust. I give these following Reasons for it.

1. *Because of the great Worth and Value of these Things that are entrusted to us.* They are well worth the keeping. The Souls committed to us are precious Souls; so precious, that no Quantity of Silver, or Gold, or precious Stones, could ever amount to a sufficient Price for their Redemption; No Price was sufficient, but the Precious Blood of Christ, 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19. O! they are dear bought Souls. Again, the Truths committed to us, are precious Truths: They are a Noble Treasure, 2 Cor. 4. 7. Every Dust of Truth is precious. The least Truth, the least Pearle in Christ's Crown, is of more Worth and Value than the Souls and Bodies of all Men.

2. *Because, it is the Lord Jesus Himself who hath entrusted these Things to us;* Even he who is the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, who hath Suprem and Sovereign Authority in the Church. We will be Faithful to an Earthly Friend, and shall we not much

more be Faithful to Him? Shall not His Authority have weight upon our Conscience?

3. Because *the Faithful keeping of these things is of very great moment.* The right Management of this weighty Trust is of great concernment. 1. To the Glory of God, and the Honour of the Mediator *Christ*. In this respect *Titus*, and other Faithful Ministers, are called the Glory of *Christ*. 2 Cor. 8. 23. The Glory of God, and the Honour of *Christ*, are not so much concerned in the Government of Kingdoms: And shall not the Glory and Honour of the *Lord* be dear to us? 2. It is of great concernment to the Salvation of our own Souls. *In doing this, thou shalt save thy self.* faith the Apostle, 1 Tim. 4. 16. A Faithful Minister delivers his own Soul. Ezek. 33. 9. When at first this great Trust is committed to us, we promise to be Faithful, and do as it were lay our own Souls in pawn; But when we have through Grace been Faithful, then we take up the pawn again. 3. It is of great concernment to the Salvation of the Souls of People. 1 Tim. 4. 16. *In doing this, thou shalt save thy self, and them that hear thee.* Through the Blessing of God, our Faithfulness and Diligence shall not be altogether without Success. *Christ* hath promised to be with us. Matt. 28. 20.

4. Because of *the many Hazards and Dangers to which these Things entrusted to us are exposed.* There are Enemies that ly in wait, and watch all Opportunities and Advantages, to ruin Souls, and to rob them and us of all the precious Interests of the Gospel. Satan, that roaring Lion, the red Dragon, the Destroyer of Souls, that potent malicious and subtle Enemy, hath many Stratagems to Catch, Ensnare and Ruin Souls. Ephes. 6. 12. And he hath many bad Instruments, Hereticks, Seducers, and other Enemies, who are of the great and wise Men of the World, and are restless in their Enmity against, and Opposition to the Truth.

5. Because of *the Solemn Charge Ministers are under, to manage their Trust Diligently and Faithfully.* I shall only read three Scriptures, where the Spirit of God speaketh to all Gospel-Ministers. 1 Tim. 5. 21. and 6. 13, 14. 2 Tim. 4. 1.

6. Because of *the dangerous consequence of a Ministers Negligence and Unfaithfulness, in the great Trust committed to them.* O! let us keep that which is committed to our Trust. It will be sad if we do

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do not keep it. Our Unfaithfulness will have many sad Effects and Consequents; It will be highly dishonourable to God and Christ, bring a sad Blot upon our Office, be Destructive to the Souls of People, and prove Fatal to our own Souls.

Fifthly. I shall in the last place, Apply this Doctrine in One Use for *Exhortation*. My very Reverend and Dear Bretheren, Seeing these Things are so, let us keep that which our Lord Jesus hath committed to our Trust: And let us keep it with Diligence and close Application, with Holy Care and Solitude, with Holy Zeal and Prudence, and with Costancy and Perseverance. We may meet with considerable Difficulties, and much Opposition in our Way; There may be old Tugging by the Devil and his Instruments, before we go off the Stage of Time. But let us be Faithful to our Dear Lord and Master, who will take it kindly, when our Zeal for Him is enflamed by Opposition. Let us be ready, through Grace, to run all Hazards, that we may keep what He hath entrusted to us. Oh, that we were of the Apostle Pauls Temper *Act. 20. 24.* *None of these things move me, (says he) neither compt I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with Joy, and the Ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God.* The Faithful Ministers of Christ have put their Lives in Hazard, that they might be Faithful to Him: Yea, many of Christs Faithful Ministers, have in all Ages, actually suffered Death and Martyrdom, for their Faithfulness. Let us then compt it an abundant Recompence for the loss of Life, if our Blessed Master get Glory and Honour by it. *Phil. 1. 20.*

I shall here offer somethings that may be of Use, through Grace, to excite and stir up our Hearts to this great and necessary Duty; And then I shall shut up this Discourse with some Directions.

First. For exciting and stirring up our selves to keep what Christ hath committed to our Trust, Let us consider these Things.

1. Let us consider *What these Things are that are entrusted to us.* O, what a Trust is it that we have undertaken! And shall we be Unfaithful in the management of it? Have we the Stewardship of Gods own Family, and shall we neglect it? Shall we be careless of the precious Truths of God, and of the precious Souls of People? Shall we see any of the precious Truths of God assaulted or falling to
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the Ground, and be silent? Shall we see the precious Souls of our People driven to the bottomless Pit, and not bestir our selves to prevent their Eternal Ruin? God forbid.

2. Let us consider *the Spiritual Obligations we are under to keep what is entrusted to us.* And 1. We are obliged to this, by our own voluntary Undertaking and Engagement. No Man forced us to be Ministers; So that even common Honesty binds us to be true to our Trust. 2. God hath bestowed Gifts upon us, for this very end, to fit us for the management of this great Trust. 2 Cor. 3. 5, 6. ----- *Our sufficiency is of God, who hath made us able Ministers of the New Testament.* And shall we not Faithfully employ our *Masters* Talents in His own Service? 3. Let us consider the obligation lying upon us, with respect to Posterity. We are Trustees for the Generations yet to come: Therefore in pity to the poor Posterity, we should keep the Gospel, and the Ordinances, and all the precious Truths of God, and transmit the same to them, that the Generations yet to come may Serve the same God, and enjoy the same Faith and Gospel. Our Godly Ancestors did Faithfully keep what God entrusted to them, and did contend Zealously and Valiantly for the Truths and Interests of *Jesus Christ*, and did transmit the same to us Sealed with their Blood: And if we in this Generation shall suffer these precious Interests to slip through our Fingers, then the Generations yet to come may rise up and curse us.

3. Consider, That *as we keep what Christ hath entrusted to us, so will He keep us.* Rev. 3. 10. *Because thou hast kept the word of my Patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of Temptation, &c.* There may be a sad Hour of Temptation coming, to try them that dwell on the Earth; And as we keep the Truths and Interests of *Christ*, so will He keep us in that Hour. *Christ* hath committed great and precious Things to *our* keeping, and we have committed our precious Souls to *his* keeping. 2 Tim. 1. 12. Therefore, if we expect He should keep faithfully what we have committed to Him, let us keep faithfully what he hath committed to us. Let us be true to Him, and we need not doubt, but He will be true to us.

4. Let us consider *what great Encouragements we have to be faithful to our Trust.* And

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(1.) Our Relation to *Christ*, and His to us, doeth not only honour, but secure us, if we be but faithful. We are His *Trusties*, His *Stewards*, &c. And he that hath thus entrusted us, will certainly maintain us in our Work.

(2.) We have his faithful promise to be with us, in the whole of our Management in His matters. *Matt. 18. 20. Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Matt. 28. 20. Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the World.* He will be with us, to furnish us with all necessary Gifts and Graces; to direct and guide us in the management of so great a Trust; to bless and prosper our faithful, though weak, Endeavours; And to preserve and uphold us amidst all the Dangers, Tryals, and Oppositions we may meet with. O what an Antidote is this against our Fears and Discouragements? *Isa. 41. 10. Fear thou not, for I am with thee: Be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the Right Hand of my Righteousness.* If God be with us, then there are more with us than can be against us. We are Stars in *Christ's* right Hand, to preserve us, if we be Faithful; So that all the Blasts of Hell shall never be able to extinguish us, so long as He hath use and service for us. *Jerem. 1. 19. They shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee.*

(3.) Consider *Christ's* Engagement with us in our work. In keeping the precious Things committed to our Trust, we are associated with Him. He is the *chief Shepherd*. *1 Pet. 5. 4.* And the *chief Minister of the Sanctuary*, *Heb. 8. 2.* God hath entrusted Him, as Mediator with the Souls of His People, and with the Supreme care and oversight of all the matters of His House. The Government is laid on his Shoulders. *Isa. 9, 6.* So that we share in Office under Him. And as this is an high Honour, so it may support us against these innumerable Discouragements we may meet with, and hearten us against our own Fears. *Christ* himself is engaged with us in our Work. We are not alone in it.

(4.) It will be our great Glory and Honour to be true to our Trust. Such a Glorious Trust, and Faithfulness therein, will render our Condition truly excellent. *Moses* was *compted worthy of glory*, for his faithfulness. *Heb. 3. 2, 3.* To be found faithful in keeping
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what our *Lord* hath committed to us, will be truly Glorious. (This will obtain you a glorious Testimony from God himself.

(5.) If we faithfully keep what God hath entrusted to us, he will see to our Maintenance and Through-bearing. God never failed to provide for His faithful Servants. He provided a Widow to feed *Elijah*; yea he commanded a Raven to feed Him, when for his Faithfulness, he was forced to Flee for his Life. Faithful Ministers had a sad time, under the Reign of *Ahab*; But God provided an *Obadiab*, who fed one hundred of them. We are *Christ's* Ambassadors; And it is not for a Princes Honour, to suffer his Ambassadors to starve. He hath promised to *satiat the Souls of His Priests with Fatness. Jerem. 31. 14.* And he hath bidden his Ministers, *take no thought what they shall eat or drink. Matt. 10. 9.* Let us not be anxiously careful what will become of us, or our poor Families. Let us be true to our Master, and the Lord will provide.

(6.) Let us consider what sweet Peace and Comfort our Faithful Management will yeild to us, especially in the evil day. *2 Cor. 1. 12. This is our rejoicing, the Testimony of our Conscience, &c.* In a day of distress, the Remembrance of this will give us a comfortable Testimony in our own Conscience. And, O How will it comfort us at Death! When we are to launch forth into the Depths of Eternity, and must presently give up our Accompts, we will need something to support and bear up our Hearts then. How sweet will it be when we can say, *Lord, I have finished the work, thou gavest me to doe.* And with *Paul. 2 Tim. 4. 7, 8. I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness.* And so

(7.) Let us consider how Gloriously *Christ* will Reward His Faithful Ministers. *1 Pet. 5. 2, 3, 4. Feed the Flock of God which is among you &c. and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away.* There is an especial Reward laid up for us, if we be true to our Trust. *Dan. 12. 3. And they that be wise (or, as the word may be rendered, Instructors, or Teachers) shall shine as the brightness of the Firmament; and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.* We dishonour our great Master, when we are solicitous about any other Recompence.

5. Let

3. Let us consider how sad it will be, if we do not make Conscience of keeping what is entrusted to us. If we suffer any of these Things to be lost or taken away, or suffer them to be corrupted, through our Unfaithfulness, or undue Silence; If we betray any of our Masters Interests; O, this will come to a sad accompt. For,

(1.) It will tend to our great shame and dishonour. It is no Glory to a Man, to have such an Honourable Trust committed to him, if he be Unfaithful in it: It will tend rather to his Reproach, Contempt and Shame. *Mal. 2. 8, 9. But ye are departed out of the way: Ye have caused many to stumble at the Law: Ye have corrupted the Covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of Hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the People; according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in my Law.* Contempt is the just Fruit of Unfaithfulness: And though Unfaithful Ministers may possibly get some Respect in this World; yet they shall have nothing but Shame and Confusion of Face, in the World to come.

(2.) Unfaithfulness in the Management of this great Trust, will expose Ministers to the heavy Wrath and Curse of God. *Mat. 25. 30. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: There shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth.* If there be any place in Hell hotter than another, it will be the portion of Negligent, Unfaithful, and Treacherous Ministers. Oh, let us consider, that it is much better to bear the Wrath of Man for the Faithful Discharge of our Trust, then to bear the Wrath of God for Unfaithful Management therein.

Second: I shall in the last place, conclude this Discourse by proposing some Things for our Direction.

1. Let us labour to get our Hearts deeply engaged in this Work; To have our Thoughts and Desires running on this, how we may Discharge our Trust Faithfully, The Apostle Paul had his Heart so much set upon this, that his very Life was not valued by him, when it stood in Competition therewith. *Act. 20. 24.* The more our Hearts be set upon this, our Work, through Grace, will be both the more easy and the more pleasant.

2. Let us raise in our Hearts high and noble thoughts, of the Excellent and Glorious Ends of our Ministry; The Glory of God, the Honour of Christ, and the Salvation of Souls. O, is it not Admir-

able, that such a great Lord, will imploy us in promoting such Glorious Ends? The great benefit that redounds to poor Souls, and the manifold Glory that redounds to God and the Mediator, by the Faithful Management of our Trust, render our Work Excellent and Glorious. High and noble thoughts of these Things, will be of great use, to animate and quicken our Endeavours.

3. *Let us keep our own Souls well.* Our own precious Soul is committed to our Trust; let us take care of that in the first place. We will never be Faithful in keeping the Souls of our People, nor in preserving and maintaining the Interests of Christ, if we do not keep our own Souls. Will it not be sad if we have ground to say, *Mine own vineyard have I not kept*, Cant. 1. 6. As it fares with the Work of God in our own Souls, so doth it fare ordinarily with our publick Ministry.

4. *Let us take heed of the causes of Unfaithful Management in our Masters Work.* Such as Pride and Ambitious Affectation, 3 Joh. v. 9. The love of the World, 2 Tim. 4. 10. Addictedness to Carnal Ease; The Slothful Servant hid his Masters Talent in a Napkin, Mat. 25. And let us take heed of a facile and easy Temper of Spirit, that readily yeilds to bad Counsels and Perswasions. It is observed of *Chrysostom*, that by reason of his simplicity, and the plainness of his Nature, he was easily wrought upon, and so ran into many inconveniencies. It is much better to be Stiff, then to be thus Flexible to Carnal Insinuations,

5. *Let us maintain a Holy Jealousy of our selves.* Our Trust is great and weighty, and we are poor weak Creatures; Therefore let us keep up a Holy Fear, lest we miscarry, and give the Ark of God a wrong touch. Prov. 28. 14. *Happy is the man (and happy is the Minister) that feareth alway.*

6. *Let us study much close and beleiving dependance on our blessed Lord and Master Christ.* He hath received Gifts for Men. Psal. 68. 18. And it pleased the Father, that in Him should all fulness dwell. Col. 1. 19. Therefore let us depend humbly upon Him for Furniture, and sufficient Abilities: And let us depend on Him for Grace and strength, that we may hold out against all Assaults and Temptations.

7. *Let us seek the help of the Spirit of God.* 2 Tim. 1. 14. *That good Thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth*

dwell in us. It is only by the help of the Holy Spirit that we can manage this Trust faithfully. Therefore, let us pray much for the Spirit; And let us carry aright toward the Spirit. Let us beware of Greiving, Vexing, Quenching or resisting Him.

8. *Let us bind our selves by Covenant, to Diligence and Faithfulness in our Masters Work.* Our Trust is great and weighry; and we have considerable Difficulties and Temptations to wrestle with; and our own Hearts are Lazy, false, and deceitful; so that there is need to lay the strongest Engagements on them, that possibly we can. Therefore, let us Covenant solemnly with God, that through the Grace and Strength of Christ, we be will faithful, in Managing the great Trust committed to us, upon all Adventures, and be the Hazard and Danger what it will.

9. *Let us call our selves often to an Accompt.* Every day let us sift our selves before the Bar of our own Conscience, and hold Court there for our Master. The Sentence we receive there, either Absolving or Condemning, and the Effects of Joy or Grief following thereupon, will be a Means to Engage us to constant Diligence and Faithfulness, in our Masters Work.

Lastly, *Let us think often on our last Accompts.* My very Reverend and Dear Bretheren, The Coming of the Lord draweth near: Our Great Master will come quickly: And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, we must give an Accompt to Him of all the Souls committed to our Charge, and of our whole Management in His Matters. Yea, the Day of our particular Accompts is yet nearer. Who can tell how soon it may be said to you or me, *Come, give an Accompt of your Stewardship.* The LORD Himself keep the Lively Sense of this alway on our Hearts. Amen.

F I N I S.

